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there is not considered to be any sort of difference in customs or character between the various villages of Zongu, with a single exception. This exception is the village of Pantoong, on the far side of the Talung valley and the nearest settlement of all to the foot of Kinchenjunga; this village was until a generation ago the home of a group of serpent-eaters. These serpent-eaters all belonged to one *ptso* or patrilineal group, the Salong *ptso*. This *ptso*, though dying out, is not yet extinct, but its living representatives no longer eat snakes. Old Lepchas of Zongu have however seen these people eat the snakes; they would stone the reptile, cut off its head, and devour the body. The origin of this habit is the following story:

'One day the ancestor of the *ptso* was going through the forest when he came on what he thought was a dead bear; but really this bear was an incarnation of Pong *rum*, the king of all animals and the patron God of hunters, who was at the moment taking a rest outside his incarnation's body. The ancestor cut up the animal and ate part of it; whereupon Pong *rum* appeared to him and said "You have eaten part of my body; henceforward you and your children must serve me and worship me and make offerings to me. Henceforward also you and your children may eat all animals, even snakes, with impunity." This is the reason why the people of Pantoong could eat and enjoy snakes, whereas the rest of us would die if we ate them.'

When I was studying the language in Kalimpong, my teacher, a missionised Lepcha, told me that the story of eating snakes was a cruel libel spread about the Lepchas by the Nepali; there was not, he insisted, an atom of truth in it, and he obviously felt that it was deeply insulting and even shameful. For the Lepchas of Zongu however the story was without unpleasant affect; it is frequently repeated as a curious and amusing anecdote, and a certain respect is felt for those people who can boast of actually having seen snakes eaten. It seems improbable that these Lepchas would feel any repulsion to eating serpents if they thought they could do so with impunity; their disgust reactions are very limited; they will eat dead domestic animals and even carrion found in the forest; and they prefer their meat to be as high as possible, provided it is not maggoty. Except during the training of the Mun priests there are no food prohibitions of any sort, except the ban on horse and dog flesh ('He who could eat the flesh of

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horse or dog could eat the flesh of man, for all three are similar') 262
and such animals and vegetables as are considered poisonous.

Snakes are regarded with a certain amount of affect, though 825
on the whole with less than might be expected. To see a snake, [187]
particularly the *pamol-beu* (a black non-poisonous snake) approaching you is a bad omen, and should it enter a house it foretells a death in that house within the year. All dreams are meaningful, and snakes in dreams have an ominous significance. Snakes do represent a considerable danger, for they are fairly common, particularly in the lower valley and in the forest, and cultivated land is always surrounded by low scrub and secondary growth in which snakes can and do hide. I was frequently asked for medicine against snake-bite, particularly by hunters, but always as a preventative, for there were no serious cases of snake-bite while I was there, nor did I hear of any fatal ones. The Lepchas know of a dioeceous plant which is [824]
believed to cure these bites, but apparently they have not much faith in it. Snakes occur very little in mythology and fable, and [831]
have no overt phallic significance; the most common phallic symbol is the maize cob, which is almost a rude word.

ii

Lingthem monastery is a two-storied rectangular building stand- 346
ing on an artificially levelled terrace about 5,500 feet above sea-level, with its principal façade facing north. The first building on the site was erected in 1855 but it has since been rebuilt three times. The first building was made by Panloak, the grandfather of old Serving, the last of his line to be head of the village; the first and second renovations and enlargements were made under the direction of learned lamas who had travelled from Tibet; the third and greatest alteration was made fifteen years ago under the direction of, and to a great extent at the expense of, the Muktair, the dead father of Tafoor and Chudo. The rebuilding was done entirely by local labour in the three winter months, with help from neighbouring villages. The material was paid for chiefly by local subscription helped by donations from the State and the British Political Officer and the structure when completed was free from debt. The monastery however still owes Rs. 600 to Lhassa for the copies of the sacred books, and the heirs of the Muktair still owe money to the money lenders for the sums the Muktair undertook personally for the materials which had to be bought and for the big metal

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and women wear a curved sickle, thrust without a sheath into the sash round their waist at the back; but this instrument is of less general use than the men's knives, and women are frequently forced to borrow knives from men who are near them.

Far and away the most important single material for the Lepchas is the bamboo, or rather the numerous varieties of different bamboos that they grow and recognise. In the house bamboo is used for the floor, ceiling, walls and balcony; out of it water-carriers, and on occasion water conduits are made. The drinking vessels—*patyoot*—are made from ten-inch sections of old and hollow bamboo; each *patyoot* is cut off just below a joint, where the natural growth forms a bottom for the vessel. The principal beverage drunk from these *patyoot* is *chi*, a sort of beer which is formed by pouring boiling water on fermented grain; this is drunk through a 'straw'—*pa-hip*—which consists of a section of a small-growing bamboo with the pith at the end loosened so as to form a rude filter. Pins and brooches are made from bamboo; bows and arrows, the Lepcha's only hunting weapons, quivers and scabbards, all are made of different sorts of bamboo; and the catalogue could be continued almost endlessly. Finally the young bamboo shoots are good to eat, and the leaves are fed to temporarily restrained domestic animals, such as oxen when they are needed for ploughing.

The Lepchas of Zongu do not know how to make pottery. Plates are usually replaced by big leaves, but there are a certain number of rudely carved wooden plates which are used on ceremonious occasions, and a few metal and china dishes and containers which have been got by trading from Tibetans or bought in exchange for cardamum.

The Lepchas weave strong and regular mats and baskets out of the bark of bamboo and various reeds, which they employ for a variety of purposes. This weaving is ideally men's work, as the weaving of thread is women's, but a certain number of women are as good mat-makers as any of the men, and there is felt to be no disgrace in employing articles made by women. During the summer months a mat called *tuk* is worn over the head as a protection against sun and rain; it is made of a double layer of finely woven bamboo filled with big leaves and has a rope in the centre to fasten it round the neck; it measures about three feet by four. Although the making of this article is considered to be specifically man's work, the best *tuk* in the village were said to be made by a woman, the mother of Gongyop.

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benefits, and foremost among these mutual benefits is the gathering and preparation of food. For Lepchas love is never automatic; if they say they love a person they will always explain why they do so. Even with young children this attitude is firmly implanted; if you ask one if he loves his parents he will almost certainly reply 'I love my father and mother because they give me my food.' If you ask about their feelings towards other people they have visited the answer again is always in terms of what they were given to eat. Rigya, a young man of twenty-two, said of his parents 'I love them both very much, but especially my mother; when I was young they gave me food and clothes and looked after me; now in my turn I must look after them.' He has been fairly recently married and at first he and his wife did not get on at all well together: 'At first we could not even look at one another, but now we are good friends; when I go out to work and come back tired my wife has food ready for me and looks after me; then I love her and think to myself "this is my wife", and I am pleased in my belly.' It may be noted that the belly is considered to be the seat of the emotions.

All ceremonial occasions among the Lepchas—birth, marriage, and death, religious ceremonies, exorcisms, and civil consultations—are marked by the consumption of extra large quantities of food and drink. Even the most solemn religious ceremonies are turned into picnics. Important past events are often remembered in terms of what the participants had to eat on such occasions. When I tried to get some of the best-adjusted Lepchas to talk about their own early lives they replied by giving me lists of menus.

The Lepchas are practically omnivorous; the only animals that they do not eat which some other races do are cats and dogs, rats and mice, horses and snakes. They eat all wild animals that they can kill or find dead, and keep and eat oxen, goats, pigs and hens; they also eat a great variety of wild forest produce, chiefly tubers of different wild yams, and various leaves which are used as seasoning; both meat and vegetables are supplementary dishes which add a relish to the cultivated cereals.

As has already been said, in former times and still today in the less fertile regions, the Lepchas relied on hunting for a great deal of their food; but in Lingthem and most of the other villages of Zongu game is hunted less and less. There are a number of reasons for this which interact on one another; the stigma which the Lepcha interpretation of lamaism places on the killing of animals excludes

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Work in the fields, whether sowing, weeding or harvesting, is nearly always done in large parties. These parties are made up partly of relations by blood or marriage, and partly by friends. Since the Lepchas trace relationship back nine generations on the father's side and at least four on the mother's there is a tendency for most villagers to have some relationship; I should guess that out of a dozen Lepchas of Lingthem taken by chance, a relationship chain could be established between eight of them. But this relationship is not necessary for field-helpers; in nearly all the lists I made there were a few people quite unrelated.

Help in the fields is always repaid with a similar amount of labour; for sowing and weeding the helpers are also always given a meal with meat. At harvesting a meal need not be given to people who volunteer their services, but must be given to those who are asked to help. At harvest payment is given in kind: forty to fifty pounds of rice to an adult worker, a big basket of millet or maize, thirty to forty pounds of buckwheat. Children are given proportionately less. The first person to harvest his dry rice, and the last to harvest the wet, must make a small present of the grain to all the other householders. Because cardamum is a money-producing and not a food-producing crop help with it is paid for in money; a rupee a head is given for work in the fields and Rs. 3/– for carrying a maund[6] to market.

iv

The most general food of the Lepchas is rice. This is prepared in four main ways; boiled whole after husking in water and eaten with meat or vegetables or other seasoning; boiled whole in milk; 'puffed', or ground fine and made into a pudding. This ground-rice pudding is often given to children. Wheat and maize may be eaten in the same way if there is no rice, but they are not liked. Buckwheat is ground and mixed with water and baked on the

[6] The *maund*, which is divided into *40 seers* is the current measure of weight in India. A maund is meant to represent the load one man can lift, and its equivalent in European measure depends partly on *what* is measured, and partly on *where* it is measured. (Similar confusion can be found in various English measures of agricultural produce such as a bushel, or a truss.) On the Indian railways a maund is equated to 80 lbs., which makes the seer 2 lbs. The Lepchas have their own measures according to the size of the basket used. Since all these measures are very rough I have generally given an approximate equivalent in lbs. avoirdupois.

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252 cooking stones; it makes a greenish cake, or 'bread' as the
262 Lepchas call it, of an astonishingly leathery consistency. On
264 ordinary days, besides snacks, the Lepchas eat two meals; the bigger
[272] one in the morning, drunk with tea, Tibetan fashion, before going to work; and a second meal in the evenings with *chi* to accompany it.

273 Millet is grown exclusively for fermenting for *chi* and is never eaten by human beings; if there is no millet any other grain will be fermented in the same way; if there is no grain bootleg liquor is made out of the pith of different tree-ferns, which is pounded and buried. The making of this alcohol from forest produce is formally forbidden but is done almost continuously; it is very strong and potentially poisonous, and has a strong purgative effect. This alcohol is under the protection of a supernatural called Manoong *moong* and when the fermented pith is pounded on a piece of wood offerings of sticks placed on the press are made to the supernatural, who will make the drink stronger or weaker according to the size of his offerings.

Chi can be prepared in about nine days, but it is stronger and more appreciated if it is left to ferment longer. Specially strong [846] *chi* is always prepared against a woman's lying-in and is given to her as a strengthening food for a month after delivery. To prepare *chi* the grain is first trodden to separate it from the husks and then put in a basket and well washed in a stream. A copper [415] vessel is also well washed and the grain put in it; it is then covered with cold water and boiled until all the water is absorbed, being stirred all the time with a wooden spoon. To make sure that all the water is absorbed the wooden spoon is stuck down to the bottom of the pot; if it comes up dripping further cooking is necessary. When it has cooked sufficiently the pot is upset on to a bamboo mat; after an hour it is removed and the cooked grain is spread all over the mat. Then a big wicker basket is well lined with bracken; the grain is mixed with powdered yeast and put into the basket which is covered with more bracken and a tightly tied cloth. The basket is then set in a corner, well away from the fire, for two or three days, at the end of which time the smell of fermentation becomes noticeable. Then special big leaves are fetched from the forest and a new basket is lined with them and the grain is transferred to the new basket, which is well tied up and set over the fire on the drying ledge. It is fit to drink after three days but it is better kept longer; it becomes undrinkable after four months.

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not, they say, what would the poor pigs have to eat? Pigs are normally fed on the used grain, unless it is rice *chi*, when the soused grain is eaten by humans. The Lepchas believe that *chi* has medicinal qualities, and especially that it is a protection against chills; it is always given to invalids. They start drinking it from the moment that they can walk and continue all their lives. It does not seem to me to be strong enough to have any deleterious effect; except for very young children and a few unstable adults, *chi* does not produce any of the usual stigmata of drunkenness. Lepchas are very conscious of the risk of drink producing quarrelling; in the myth which tells of the origin of *chi*[6] the original yeast was stolen from an old woman who put the curse of quarrelsomeness on it. In point of fact I heard practically no quarrelling at feasts, though people became loud-mouthed, and more shameless in speech than ever, and a couple of men, Dumbi and Katel, used to get maudlin and say how miserable they were and threaten suicide. Unconsciousness induced by drink is unheard of, and so is physical incapacity; but at a feast people usually sleep where they are and only go home in the morning. Drink is mellowing, soothing and pleasant, rather than stimulating and exciting.

Fish is occasionally caught and eaten boiled, as a relish, but not very often. Meat is somewhat of a luxury, and on the whole people do not kill animals except as a sacrifice or when giving a big feast. There are, however, some exceptions to this; Tempa, who had a number of oxen and not very much grain, killed a couple of his cattle and exchanged the meat for the grain he needed. Fowls, wild birds and goat meat are eaten fresh; but beef and pork are preferred high; according to the weather the meat is kept from four days in the hottest season to a fortnight or longer in the coldest weather, before it is considered to be at its most tasty. Only if meat is maggoty will it be thrown away unused. Dead domestic animals and carrion found in the jungle will be eaten unless putrid. Meat is nearly always boiled; and sausages are made from the intestines of bigger animals which are cleaned and stuffed with the edible internal organs chopped fine together with flavouring herbs. These sausages are always made immediately after an animal has been killed. Another favourite form of relish is bullock skin which has been exposed to the sun and then boiled for a very long time until the inside fat is tender; it is eaten cold. There is a certain amount of variety in the manner

[6] See Appendix IV: The Sacred story of the origin of marriage.

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of cooking dishes and compounding the various ingredients; but on the whole the material provided is of more importance than the cooking. Except that a meal with meat is universally preferred to one without there does not seem to be any particularly favourite food; Tafoor voiced the general opinion when he said his favourite dish was *chi*. I did not get enough detailed menus to be able to state with certainty how often meat is usually eaten inside the household; from such information as I have got I should say richer people eat it three or four times a week, poor people once or twice. When it is available it is eaten in the morning and evening.

Lepcha diet is relatively monotonous, notably less highly spiced than the food of the Nepali or Indians; there are no devices for tempting jaded palates; food is to satisfy hunger, and enough is as bad as a meal. A feast definitely implies over-eating, and it is quite a common subject among old people to deplore that their powers of over-eating are failing; that once upon a time they could eat fourteen pounds of meat in a day, and now they cannot manage four with comfort! These actual figures were used by Adér, who is well over seventy and has lost half his teeth.

As can be seen, the Lepchas have, for a primitive people, a remarkably high standard of living, as far as food and drink is concerned; it is certainly far higher than that of the Lepchas outside Zongu or any of the neighbouring peoples that I know of. Levelling out the answers I have received and my own observations, I should say that the average consumption of grain annually by an adult Lepcha is about 400 lbs.; besides that about another 300 lbs. is consumed for *chi*. These quantities naturally do not allow for entertainment or gifts. There are three households who perhaps do not quite reach this standard, those of Dunbi, Nahyeun and Pargeut. Dunbi is said to be the poorest man in the village, but this is chiefly his own fault, for he sits about drinking and gossiping instead of working. Nahyeun is a young man fairly recently married; he is reputed to be Dunbi's bastard and is himself not over energetic. He recently married Tobgé's sister and they have set up house on their own because his wife did not agree with the two wives of Asang, with whom he formerly lived; they consequently have no reserves and few permanent fields. The third poor man, Pargeut, is really unfortunate; he has six small children of which only the two eldest are of an age to help him, and they are girls betrothed outside the village; he has also a very

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231 remarkably tame. Our diet was, alas, almost entirely confined to chicken, and we ate so many that we exhausted the supply of the immediate neighbourhood and fowls had to be brought in to us from distant villages. When they arrived carried in open-work baskets they would just be thrown out in front of the house; they would wander about the neighbourhood picking at the plants and occasionally flapping over the fences which shut in the fields; but they never tried to get away and every evening would come under the house for the grain they were given and would roost quite happily in the strange building. They very seldom run away and children can quite easily pick them up in their hands.[8] In the late evening the sight under the house where a number of animals are gathered together is very strange; cattle, pigs, goats, hens, dogs and cats are all tangled up in a heap sleeping on top of one another. Children have absolutely no fear of domestic animals, [857] and one of the favourite games of little boys of five and six is to play at butting matches with young goats.

462 Animals must never on any account be killed by a woman; this is the only complete and absolute prohibition of any form of activity for either sex. There are some acts which are more commonly or indeed exclusively practised by men or by women only, but there is no sort of prohibition for members of the other sex doing them if they feel so inclined. For example only women spin and only men weave baskets; but there is no reason why a man should not spin if he wanted to and knew how, and in point of fact some women do weave baskets and mats. There are some things which women's relative lack of strength prevents them doing, particularly dealing with the big blocks of wood necessary for house building; that is considered a natural limitation and is not a cultural law. Men are expected to be better tree climbers than women, but there are quite a few cases of women being more efficient at this than their husbands; the husband feels no humiliation at this superiority on the part of his wife nor is he laughed at by other members of the community; if anything he is rather lucky in having an exceptionally able partner. But for the killing of animals the prohibition is absolute. It would be a sin to eat, even unknowingly, an animal killed by a woman, though in that case the lamas can cleanse the unwitting offender by ceremonies and offerings

262 673

[757] [8] There is an odd variety of fowl with almost black flesh and skin and a great number of rudimentary feathers. Although the colouring does not alter the taste this type is despised and is only used as a cure for orchitis.

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to the monastery. But to eat an animal so killed wittingly is a sin without remedy and which will be heavily visited in the next reincarnation.

Lamas naturally cannot kill animals nor should they eat them on the same day that they have been killed; these prohibitions, however, do not extend to the lay members of the lama's family. In a house where there are no laymen lamas will call one in to act as a butcher for them; the butcher will get as fee twelve to fourteen lbs. of meat from the crutch of an ox, smaller but similar amounts from a goat or pig, and a drink of *chi* for a chicken. Cattle are usually killed with a bow and arrow, shooting from very near; sometimes they are stoned or killed with a pointed knife. Pigs and goats are killed with a pointed knife if there is one, otherwise with a piece of sharpened bamboo. Chickens are usually knocked on the head. Boys above the age of ten can kill chickens and goats, and pigs after fifteen; but only a completely potent person will have the courage to kill an ox.

vi

With small exceptions the land and animals are considered to be the property of the householder, in whose name the house is registered and who is responsible for the payment of taxes. This householder is usually the oldest man in the prime of life in the family; a grandfather who has living sons usually gives the control in his life time over to his eldest son. In theory the property descends from elder to younger brother, and then, when all of the first generation are dead or too old, to the sons of the elder brother. In point of fact it is seldom that there is more than one family of each generation in one household; if the group becomes over-large the sons usually set up house on their own. If a son wishes to set up on his own during his father's life time, the father assigns to him, with the consent and co-operation of the Mandal and *youmi*[1] his proportionate share of the land. If when the father is dead the sons wish to separate the property is divided by the Mandal, *youmi*, and *gyapōn*. The house is given to the eldest son, the animals and movable property divided up equally; the land is also divided up equally, the eldest son having the first choice and, if there is difference in the size of the fields, the biggest fields. In the event of the number of fields not being exactly divisible by the number

[1] *Youmi* and *gyapōn* are village officials: for further explanation see Chapter Five, p. 131.

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512 to visit a girl with whom he has made an appointment, to return home before dawn; but most people sleep heavily after the day's work.

527 Nine days out of ten this represents the normal Lepcha life, for
[461] the Lepchas are extremely hard-working and industrious; though they do not work fast they work steadily and for very long hours. But the monotony of working life is continually broken up by feasts and ceremonies; there are the regular bi-monthly monastery feasts, and in most months there are one or more calendrical lamaist festivals; people are born, or marry, or die, or fall ill, and these are all occasions for feasts for the friends and neighbours of the
[574] people affected. There is also a continual current of visits; married women return to their native village, taking with them their children or some relative of their husband's; young men go to visit their *asék*'d bride, accompanied by a friend or relation to help carry the gift; trading partners come on a visit or are visited. All these visits are also occasions for feasts, not so elaborate as the big ceremonial feasts, but a pleasant interruption of everyday routine. The occurrence of feasts varies somewhat with the calendar; they are most frequent in the autumn after the harvests have been gathered and the cardamum sold, and least common in the early summer before the harvest is ripe, when supplies may be running short.

The most regular of all are the bi-monthly monastery feasts, and since, owing to the fact that I was living in the monastery, I was inevitably in the centre of them, it is these gatherings which represent for me the typical Lepcha crowd. At an ordinary feast about eighty or ninety people will be present; occasionally the feast-givers are poor or unpopular and then there are only thirty or forty; and once, when Tafoor was responsible for a bumper feast, there were well over a hundred. About a dozen lamas are seated in the prayer room; six or seven nuns and a considerable number of other women and old men and young children are crowded together on the floor of the small prayer-drum room, the *lha-gong*. Inside the porch, on the right-hand side, is seated the Mandal; next to him is probably Gongyop, as these two are great friends, and the givers of the feast if they are laymen, and strangers and visitors to the village. Outside are probably two cooking places; one to the front of the
● [262] monastery is fairly small and on it is probably cooking the vegetable 'curry' (*hi*) which is served as a relish to the staple cereal. On the east side there are probably two or three big pots cooking, one

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its base into the ground some way away from the grown-ups. It is quite a common sight to see little children who can hardly walk solemnly drinking their *chi* sitting in a circle round the communal cup. These babies quite often get rather drunk and flushed and hiccupy and unsteady on their legs and loud spoken; but this is usually followed very quickly by sleep and after a couple of hours they seem to wake up no whit the worse for their experience.

From about midday food is being served almost continuously; there seems practically no limit to what a Lepcha can eat and drink on a feast day. This is a typical menu of the food consumed per head between say, 11 o'clock in the morning and 9 o'clock at night at a good feast: 3 lbs. of rice served in two helpings; 3 *patyoot* of *chi* which were constantly replenished, and 3 cups of strained *chi* which is very much stronger and resembles a mild spirit; 2 double fistfuls of popped corn; about 2 lbs. of meat, one to eat and one raw piece to take home;[2] four helpings of tea; plenty of curry and vegetables with the rice and as much soup made from vegetables and stock as people cared to consume. For this feast every guest brought some contribution, but if the hosts had had to buy all the materials they provided the cost would have been at least Rs. 60 (about £5). This was considered a good party, but nothing extraordinary or out of the way.

All the time the feasting is going on the service continues intermittently; but there are intervals when the lamas come outside the monastery for a rest and to relieve themselves. Early in the day they wander down into the wood below the monastery, but later on, as they have eaten and drunk more, they just go to the edge of the built-up wall at the end of the monastery compound and squat down with their backs to the people. During these intervals also they shave one another's heads. Also from time to time they put their heads under a running stream to take away the fumes of the *chi*.

The rest of the people also get somewhat mellowed, though usually not noticeably drunk; I have never seen an adult Lepcha lose control of his movements through drink, though one or two of the older people get somewhat fogged in their speech. The younger women move about more than the others carrying the big ladles of boiling water to replenish the *chi* and handing out the food; they

[2] It is always the custom when the last dish is served at a Lepcha feast to put on top a portion of raw meat or sausage for the guest to take home and eat at leisure.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

This is not, however, to relegate them to the position of domestic slaves; and while the laws of the state do not permit a woman to inherit land, she can, and does, own other property, and is an equal partner with her husband in the management of the household affairs.

In addition to the cereal food they raise, all the Jongu Lepchas keep pigs and cattle, which they slaughter from time to time. No attempt is made to breed from the best stock; nor is a bull ever taken to a cow, who "chooses her own husband," as Tafoor naïvely put it. All pigs are castrated when they are three months old, as they are considered to get savage after this age. Incidentally, it may be noted that the eating of uncastrated pig's flesh is believed to cause a man to become homosexual, a perversion which is practically unknown amongst Lepchas and regarded with disgust. There was only one known case in Lingtem, both parties being now old men with grown-up families. There is, as a matter of fact, no word in the Lepcha language for homosexuality, a man who practises it being called merely "one who has eaten uncastrated pig." This prohibition does not apply to women, and is ineffective outside the Lepcha tribe, Tibetans and Nepalese, for instance, being unaffected if they eat this flesh. Nor does it apply to the eating of wild boars, a particular delicacy which the Lepcha does not often obtain.

All domestic animals are regularly fed, and during monastery festivals I several times noticed men and women take a few scraps and give them to the stray dogs which hung around the place. The house-dog is kindly treated and, like all the other domestic animals, given a name. Pigs, chickens, and dogs are generally given the dregs of the fermented millet after it has been used for making *chi*, as a result of which the former are said sometimes to become inebriated, but I must confess that I have not myself seen a drunken pig. They also feed on human excrement, and may often be seen following people out to the fields for this purpose.

Sheep are not kept in Jongu, as the climate is thought to be too hot; but actually the dense forest would make grazing difficult. Nor does one ever see a horse or a mule, two

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

nettles, which they have previously gathered against their 585
arrival. As soon as the *Sarong chut* is handed over the party is allowed to enter the house, where it spends the rest of the day and night feasting and drinking. The pork is consumed by the women only, and the men receive no share of it.

When the bridegroom's party arrives it is given a light meal of tea and parched rice, followed, of course, by the inevitable *chi*. Later on a special ceremonial meal known as *Sohol set zo-kup* is served, which consists of cooked rice, pork, and two chickens, one of which is eaten by the bridegroom and the other by the bride's attendants. [262]

Early the next morning the party returns to the boy's home. It is now augmented by the bride and her attendants, who are as follows:

Kegu Numbu:	He is the leader of the bride's party and should be an elderly and experienced man. The office is usually performed by some near relative.
Rum fat-bo:	A sacrificer. He makes the necessary offerings to the gods and is usually a Mun.
Aku:	The bride's younger paternal uncle.
Ajyong:	One or other of the bride's mother's brothers.
Changku:	Some elderly friend of the family and preferably a man of standing in the village. His duties are to prepare and distribute the meat at the wedding feast.
Nyom Moo:	One or other of the bride's mother's sisters.
Nyom Chimbu:	Bridesmaid. The bride's sister often undertakes this duty; but she must be unmarried.
Nyom Faming:	Bride's brother: younger, if possible. He represents all her male relatives.
Faming Tyol:	Male attendant upon the *Nyom Faming*.

In addition to the above there are also a number of men to

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

bamboo of which is put down in front of each of the guests. 585
As soon as the guests have somewhat collected themselves a 585
meal of bullock's lights is served; it seems to me a most 262
unsuitable dish to offer at dawn on the "morning after."
When this delicacy has been disposed of a further meal of rice, vegetables, and so on, in fact the ordinary daily fare, is served. This is followed by yet another dish known as *Alook Zo*, which consists of rice and ribs of beef. It is served to everybody present; but each member of the bride's party receives a piece of raw beef to take home. This is placed on top of the dish of cooked food and is known as *Mangkar*. It is as though, when one goes out to dinner, one finds a juicy raw chop resting on top of the savoury, which one quietly removes and puts in one's pocket. I think it a nice idea.

In the meantime still another bullock, called *Myok Long*, has 585
been tied up a little distance from the house, and to this spot such members of the party as are still capable of walking now proceed. When they get there the bridegroom tells them that the animal has cost him thirty rupees. A certain amount of argument now follows, in which various men express their opinion as to the real worth of the animal; and if the general opinion is that it is not really worth more than, say, twenty-five rupees, then the bridegroom must pay the difference in cash to the bride's attendants. The *Rum fat-bo* is now summoned. He is presented with one rupee and a scarf and sits down near the bullock, with a bamboo of *chi* at his side. He offers the animal to the gods and demons, meanwhile the bride's younger brother kills it with a bow and arrow.

The bride and bridegroom now come and stand before the Mun. "From now on," he says to them, "live peaceably together; or failing this may you be gored by a bullock like this one now lying dead in front of us." To this little speech he adds his personal congratulations and tells the bride that he hopes she will be blessed with at least six boys and six girls.

The party now returns to the house, and there then follows 585
a ceremony called *Ong Kay*. A large plate is put in the middle 431
of the principal room, and into this the bridegroom's parents,

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

257 466

This little ceremony, if it can be dignified by such a name, is called *Pi-bo azom.* 585 431

This completes the second day's proceedings; but, as before, drinking and conversation are continued well into the night. At about one a.m. one of the *Pi-bos* goes round with a large bowl of the special ceremonial unstrained *chi* and offers it to each of those present. As before, it is not consumed: it is merely offered as an indication that the day's ceremonies are over and that everyone should from then onwards at least talk quietly if he does not wish to sleep. 585

On the third morning everyone is again wakened with a bowl of *chi.* Lights, however, are not again served, but on this occasion all the guests are given *Tum cheu,* or the entrails of the bullock killed the day before, stuffed with meat of various kinds. These are prepared by the *Changku,* who, as we have already noted, is in entire charge of the distribution of meat. This meal of sausage is followed by another of ordinary rice and vegetables, on top of which is put a hunk of raw beef for each member of the bride' party. As her attendants leave for home each one tears a bit off the joint he has received and returns it to the donor: this symbolises the presentation of a return gift. 585 262

The marriage is now over and the bridegroom makes ready to escort the bride, together with all her attendants, back to her home. Before they leave they are presented with a special gift of food called *Lom-to Lom-chong,* which consists of eight pounds of chi-millet and eight pounds of rice. This is meant to be consumed on the way back; but even if the two houses are only a few hundred yards apart the present must be given just the same. The party also takes with it a present known as *Dong-chong Dong-len,* which consists of a load of chi-millet for the bride's parents. 585 431

When the party reaches the girl's home the bride and bridegroom remain there for either three or seven days; but they must on no account leave on any of the intervening days, which are considered inauspicious. When they finally leave for the husband's home they are given a present called 585 591 431

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

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[262]

3 pounds of rice, served in two portions.

3 bamboo containers of *chi*, each one refilled with hot water as soon as emptied and as often as any strength remains in the millet. The general effect of this is roughly equivalent to about eight bottles of fairly strong beer. This represents the average daily consumption by most men and women: topers drink considerably more than this, children rather less.

4 bowls of tea.

2 handfuls of parched grain.

2 portions of meat; one served with the rice, the other given raw to take home at the end of the day.

Soup, as demanded.

3 small cups of strained spirit, each one roughly equivalent to a double portion of neat whisky.

To-day's feast has cost Tafoor and his co-host about thirty rupees each in actual cash; but most of the food and drink, of course, was provided from the family store. He bought the meat and also an ox's skin from Tempa; but if everybody in the village turned up a whole ox would have been necessary. In addition to the above most people brought contributions of vegetables and odds and ends of spices. Incidentally, the skin of an animal is considered a particular delicacy, and I saw several people hard at work chewing the bits of raw ox skin. It looked like, as indeed it was, leather, so the threat of eating one's boots would appear to be no idle boast in Jongu. Tafoor says that high pork is also very nice; goat, however, should always be eaten fresh. Slightly high beef is extremely good. In summer it can only be kept for three or four days, but in winter it will last as long as a month: it is at its best after about a week. People never throw high meat away; but if maggoty it is liable to make one ill. Apart from this the higher meat is, the better it tastes, except in the case of game birds, which should only be eaten fresh: *de gustibus non est disputandum*.

[31]

3: Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1953)1953
AK5 Lepcha AK5

Hunting and fishing among the Lepchas

R. DE NEBESKY-WOJKOWITZ
Kalimpong, Bengal

224 Hunting, which formed only a century ago a substantial part of the economy of the Lepchas[1] — the aboriginal inhabitants of the Himalayan State of Sikkim — is at present gradually decreasing in importance, in proportion with the development of agriculture and the breeding of cattle. Many of the Lepcha men still pursue hunting occasionally, but more in the way of a useful pastime and only a few professional hunters can be found nowadays.

223 224 262 The animals hunted are birds — only those, which do not feed on carrion and meat in general, being considered fit for consumption — hares, deer, musk deer, stags, bear and wild pigs. Some of these animals are hunted not only for their meat but also in order to obtain some parts of the body which are valued as medicines, e. g. the bile and liver of a bear, the bones of certain birds, etc. — Crows, rats and mice who attack the crops, are killed as well, but not eaten. Occasionally, a leopard or man-eating tiger is trapped, but their meat is not touched. The hunting of elephants and rhinos which was rather popular at one time, judging from the numerous accounts still circulating among the Lepchas, does not seem to be practised anymore.

784 177 224 A religious prohibition which is, however, not always strictly kept, exists against the killing, and especially the eating, of monkeys, who frequently invade the fields and cause considerable damage. No other *tabu* seems to exist, except the prohibition of killing a white

7: Hooker D-5 (1849-1851) 1854
AK5 Lepcha AK5

partners, who wear only one.* When in full dress, the woman's costume is extremely ornamental and picturesque; besides the shirt and petticoat she wears a small sleeveless woollen cloak, of gay pattern, usually covered with crosses, and fastened in front by a girdle of silver chains. Her neck is loaded with silver chains, amber necklaces, &c., and her head adorned with a coronet of scarlet cloth, studded with seed-pearls, jewels, glass beads, &c. The common dress is a long robe of indi, a cloth of coarse silk, spun from the cocoon of a large caterpillar that is found wild at the foot of the hills, and is also cultivated: it feeds on many different leaves, Sal (*Shorea*), castor-oil, &c.

In diet, they are gross feeders;† rice, however, forming their chief sustenance; it is grown without irrigation, and produces a large, flat, coarse grain, which becomes gelatinous, and often pink, when cooked. Pork is a staple dish: and they also eat elephant, and all kinds of animal food. When travelling, they live on whatever they can find, whether animal or vegetable. Fern-tops, roots of *Scitamineæ*, and their flower-buds, various leaves (it is difficult to say what not), and fungi, are chopped up, fried with a little oil, and eaten. Their cooking is coarse and dirty. Salt is costly, but prized; pawn (Betel pepper) is never eaten. Tobacco they are too poor to buy, and too indolent to grow and cure. Spices, oil, &c. are relished.

They drink out of little wooden cups, turned from knots of maple. or other woods; these are very curious on several accounts; they are very pretty, often polished, and mounted with silver. Some are supposed to be antidotes against

* Ermann (Travels in Siberia, ii. p. 204) mentions the Buraet women as wearing two tails, and fillets with jewels, and the men as having one queue only.

† Dr. Campbell's definition of the Lepcha's *Flora cibaria*, is, that he eats, or must have eaten, everything soft enough to chew; for, as he knows whatever is poisonous, he must have tried all; his knowledge being wholly empirical.

11;Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
AK5 Lepcha AK5

In another legend it is told how the bear was given to the Rong as game to be hunted. "One day the ancestor of the *Rong* was going through the forest when he came on what he thought was a dead bear; but really this bear was an incarnation of Pong rum, the king of all animals and patron god of hunters who was at the moment taking a rest outside his incarnate body. The ancestor cut up the animal and ate part of it; whereupon Pong rum appeared to him and said, 'You have eaten part of my body; henceforward you and your children must serve me and worship me and make offerings to me. Henceforward also you and your children may eat all animals, even snakes, with impunity.' This is the reason why the people of Pantoong could eat and enjoy snakes, whereas the rest of us would die if we ate them."[66] From these legends it appears clearly that the Supreme God, Ta-she-thing, gave to the Rong folk wild boar, bear, fish and honey as food and taught them to use bow and arrows, to shoot the game, and to catch fish with the net.

It has already been mentioned above that Pong rum, the god of the hunters, goes by different names depending on whether he drives towards the hunters, the game from the slopes of the highest mountains, or from the foot of the mountains or the plains. It appears also that these animals are looked upon as manifestations of the deity. The following story, related to us by the son of the A-chi Bong-thing who hails from a famous hunting family, lends support to this theory. "We were hunting in the thick virgin forests at the foot of the mountains at the beginning of the plains. Suddenly I came across an enormous bull with mighty horns. The bull was asleep; yet, the sight of this gigantic animal so terrified me that I staggered, as one drunk, to the ground and felt as if my soul had left my body. That could only be the hunting god and it was useless to shoot, as he was proof against wounds. The bull awoke, stood erect, and with a thunderous bellowing drove the cows and calves further into the forest. We withdrew as quickly as we could and fled for safety." The hunters call the Mithan Sa-dzug-big in the Lepcha language. They say that he usually lives in the higher mountains as far as the

66. Gorer, op. cit. p. 86.

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
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136 Gaval and Arna are the Hindi names for the water-
[71] buffalo. In Bombay State, as far as the Central Provinces the name Ran bhainsa, water buffalo, is used for Gaur. In Mahrathi, it is pronounced gavya ; in Tamil, katuerimai ; in Malayalam, karthu ; in Kanarese, kar-kona.[69]

[231 The wild Gaur and the Mithan cannot be tamed. The
232] Gayal, which is wrongly called the Mithan, has no wild ancestor, but is only a cross between the wild bull and the domesticated cow. A clear proof of the mongrel characteristics of the Gayal is this : In districts where the Gaur are numerous and therefore more frequently mate with the domestic cows, the Gayal shows some resemblance to the Gaur, —the massive build with high backbone, etc. Through the constant adding of wild blood this characteristic is preserved, *e.g.* in the upper mountains of Assam. In districts where the Gaur are rare as for instance in the Chin hills, the build of the mongrel is smaller, the ridge at the back disappears, the dewlap grows larger and the horns more like those of the cows. By the fourth generation the maternal component of the ordinary cattle is again quite dominant.[70] In these circumstances one should no longer look for the wild ancestors of the Gayal.

224 There is also a species of animals which the Rong do not
262 kill, *viz.* the wild dog which is reddish in colour. Nor are
825 they allowed to eat the flesh of tame dogs and horses. In this respect they are on par with the Tibetans.

776 There are legends pertaining to other curious creatures which are supposed to live in the thick virgin forests. Bönmän-che is the Nepalese name ; a "Wild man" who is said to be about as large as a great monkey. The Lepcha name for this creature is Sog-pa. Another being is the Bön-sacri, the "Wild magician." This creature is believed to kidnap the children of men and lead them away into the depths of the forest, where it instructs them in the arts of magic and makes them so accustomed to the wild forest life that they shun the company of men. The wives of the Bön-sacri are the Lidini, the "Wild wives." The Rong hunter must be proof against
[782] the attacks of all these beings, and so he pays tribute to and

69. S. H. Prater, Indian Animals, Bombay, p. 204.
70. S. H. Prater, op. cit. p. 201 sq.

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
AK5 Lepcha AK5

after the sowing of each of their grains, they are offered sakyous-faat to ensure a good harvest.

Only the three crops are connected with the people of Mayal; the others come from different supernaturals, barley, wheat, buckwheat, and wet rice come from Kongen-bu, the god of Kinchenjunga, a Sikkimese deity; no important ceremonies are connected with these crops. Cardamum, as has already been said, comes from Nepal and is under the patronage of the foreign Elaiji-nyou, who dislikes women, in particular menstruating women. The people of Mayal are said to share this dislike and should a menstruating woman visit them there would be the terrible result that all the people of Mayal would fall asleep and would not send the migratory birds."[71]

The spring sacrifice is simple. The autumn sacrifice on the contrary is very copious. For this an old experienced man is elected to represent the ancestors of Mayal and he is called Mayal-mu. A woman is selected to represent the Talyeu-mu, the sister earth. When the ceremony cannot be completed on the same day, those taking part in it stay with each other for the night. There is free intercourse between the sexes; however, the comprehensive ban on incestual relations is not broken. This recalls the sexual freedom which is indulged in at the festivals of Spring and Autumn among many Asiatic peoples and which we observed in the Tibeto-Chinese province Tsing-hai among Chinese, Tujen Tibetans, etc. The representation of ancestors and agricultural spirits by masquerading in their guise is again a well-known custom among Asiatic primitives usually connected with the New Year festivals. Thus the sacrifices of the hunters and of the cultivators stand out in sharp contrast with each other.

The Lepcha, Suliman, gave us informatin about another family sacrifice to the Supreme God, Ta-she-thing. Anyone who knows the rites may perform it, whether it be a man or a woman. The one who performs it must fast for three days before the ceremony, *i.e.* he must not eat the chief meal of rice but he can eat the other dishes. During this time he must take three baths. The bathing place is prepared near the

71. Gorer, op. cit. 238 sq.

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
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illness which is hereditary in the family. Numerous examples prove that the Shaman disposition does in fact appear as a kind of illness."[105]

Our own studies have brought to light the existence of similar dispositions among the Rong. In both places there is the same conception of the spirits of Shaman. These spirits sometimes take the form of animals, *e.g.*, that of a bull. "His bull-form walks abroad, is also said by the forest Juraks, when the soul of a Shaman has departed to another world."[106] They also bring the deceased into the kingdom of the dead.[107] All these facts run a close parallel to our findings among the Rong and other primitive hunter tribes in India.

Further similarities are found in the mode of consecration and instruction. The Shaman costume however is fundamentally different. The Rong have no special costume, while among the different Siberian peoples, a wide variety of customs are worn.

(*k*) The Social Classes of the Rong.

According to the general tradition existent among the Rong, they claim to have been originally a race of hunters, and that in the very early times before the Tibetans, the Bhutanese and the Nepalese had infiltrated into their country, they lived as the free rulers of the immese forests which were their home. The Lepchas have a clear knowledge of the animals, the birds, the plants, the fruits and the roots, and can tell which are poisonous and which are edible. Even today the Lepcha will not starve if the harvest fails, for he will procure as his sustenance the edible leaves, fruits and roots from the forest. One such root is the dayout-buck. After being dug up it is broken into small pieces and soaked in water for three days to remove the poison and clear off the lye. A ferment is then added and a kind of beer produced. Another root is the dog-bo or bok-yik. It is cut up, the lye cleared, and then it is cooked and crushed. The broth is eaten like rice. This is of a pale violet colour.

105. op. cit. p. 462.
106. op. cit. p. 478.
107. op. cit. p. 478.